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REAGAN: There have been leaks and I am disturbed about many of the leaks, but we're not doing anything that I think unfairly imposes a restriction upon the right of the people to know or the freedom of information.

MACNEIL: Good evening. President Reagan said on Wednesday that during his term as president there had been very serious leaks of classified information that had actually endangered U.S. relations with another country. The president, in remarks to American newspaper publishers in New York, was defending the directive he issued in March to prevent leaks of information by government employees. Critics have called the directive one of the most sweeping secrecy edicts ever issued by the White House. Democratic Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan told the same gathering 'the effect of the directive could well be to strike at the heart of the ability of the public to be informed about their government.' Government defenders of the directive say it is overdue and is needed to check a growing threat to national security. Tonight, will the president's secrecy directive protect national security or will it endanger freedom of speech? Jim Lehrer is off. Charlayne Hunter-Gault's in Washington. Charlayne?

HUNTER-GAULT: Robin. President Reagan's stop-the-leaks directive touches a number of different bases. First it requires all government employees with security clearance to sign a secrecy pledge and if requested submit to a lie-detector test. If they refuse, they could face 'adverse consequences, including dismissal.' Until now, only those in the most secret agencies like the CIA were required to take lie-detector tests. The directive also calls for pre-publication clearance. Under it, all employees privy to especially sensitive information will now be required to submit for review and/or censorship any book, articles or speeches they write. The order applies for life, even if the employee leaves government service. The directive expands upon a 1980 Supreme Court ruling against former CIA agent, Frank Snepp. He published a critical book about the agency without first clearing it with the CIA. The Court said the government had the right to pre-screen such material. There is one recommendation pending before the administration aimed at further toughening of the new directive. It proposes making leaking a crime, punishable by three years in prison, and up to a \$10,000 fine. That recommendation, as well as the new secrecy directive, were drafted by the interdepartmental group on unauthorized disclosures of classified information. Its chairman is Deputy Assistant Attorney General Richard Willard. Mr. Willard, what kinds of threats to the national security have prompted your new directive? WILLARD: This is not a new problem. Leaks of classified information have troubled presidents for 10 or 20 years or longer. And it's not necessarily a problem that's become more severe under this administration. It's continued, however, to cause a lack of confidence in our government's ability to keep secret important information that should be kept secret about our national defense.

HUNTER-GAULT: Well, the president said that there were very serious leaks that were threatening the national security of the country. Can you give me, I know that you can't reveal specifically, what those leaks were, but can you give me some ball park kinds of examples that would illustrate what you're talking about? WILLARD: Some of the leaks disclosed our intelligence capabilities. In other words they reveal how our intelligence services obtain information from foreign sources. That not only